**NEW JERSEY DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION**

**ABBOTT PRESCHOOL PROGRAM IMPLEMENTATION GUIDELINES**
**OFFICE OF EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION**
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## NEW JERSEY STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION

**ABBOTT PRESCHOOL PROGRAM IMPLEMENTATION GUIDELINES**

## INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this document is to provide guidance from the Department of Education to enable Abbott school districts to fully execute the order imposed by the New Jersey Supreme Court. These guidelines will help Abbott school districts plan, develop, and realize high-quality preschool programs for three-and four-year old children. The guidelines are derived from research wherever possible, and on expert opinion where research is not available. In general, the guidelines provide recommendations and not mandates in an effort to accommodate local conditions, contexts and needs. The Three-Year Operational Plans are based on these guidelines and aimed toward meeting the *Early Childhood Education Program Expectations: Standards of Quality.*

District plans are driven by the research-based best practices offered in this document, a systematic assessment of the needs of children in the district, and the Abbott Early Childhood Program Aid Three-Year Plan instructions. The plans are updated annually for budget approval and should be consistent with the district's facility plan. Districts, with the technical assistance of the Office of Early Childhood Education (OECE), will provide universally high-quality preschool programs via a locally determined mix of child care, school-based and Head Start classrooms. The Court has also explicitly directed the state to provide funds to those Head Start classrooms serving Abbott-eligible children.

# BACKGROUND AND HISTORY

On May 21, 1998, New Jersey's Supreme Court mandated that children in New Jersey's Abbott districts -- the 30 highest poverty districts in the state -- receive a high-quality preschool education beginning at age three. The purpose is to prepare these children to enter kindergarten with skills and abilities more comparable to those of their wealthier suburban peers. The court's mandate has a strong scientific basis. Intensive, high-quality preschool programs can close much of the early achievement gap for lower income children. This substantially increases their school success and produces a host of life-long benefits, including increased school achievement and social and economic success as adults. These goals can be reached through the creation and support of high-quality preschool programs for all eligible children. The court-ordered Abbott preschool effort presents an extraordinary opportunity to meet the needs of New Jersey's most disadvantaged children.

The New Jersey Supreme Court set out a few basic standards for quality preschool education:

(1)     A certified teacher and an assistant for each class;
(2)     Maximum class size of 15 students;
(3)     Developmentally appropriate curriculum;
(4)     Adequate facilities; and,
(5)     Transportation, health and other related services as needed.

These standards are the essential minimum ingredients of effective preschool education. High teacher and teacher assistant quality are imperative. Enrollment should not exceed 15 in any preschool classroom. Adding extra staff to a larger class is not an acceptable alternative. Facilities should be large enough (950 square feet per classroom for new construction) and organized for the activities of preschool children, which differ in most respects from the activities of grade school children. Barriers to attendance like transportation and work schedules must be addressed. Health, nutrition, and other services should be incorporated, and family involvement should be maximized.

To serve all Abbott preschool children in an expedient and high-quality manner, the court recognizes the value of working with public school, Head Start or private childcare programs. Regardless of who operates the program, school districts are primarily responsible for the provision of high-quality preschool education and related services that meet the court's standards. To this end, the court requires that the school districts conduct local needs assessments to develop program plans that meet the specific needs of their children. The court standards offer a basic framework for individual districts to utilize when developing this plan and when evaluating how well children and their communities are being served.

**Why did the Court order preschool for children in Abbott districts, and why did they specify these standards?**

Children who spend the early years of their lives in poverty enter school with academic and, to some extent, social abilities, that are far below their potential. This is shown by the low test scores and limited language skills of young children from low income families (Barnett, Tarr & Frede, 1999; Hart & Risley, 1995).

Research has now established that many of the chronic problems plaguing urban schools -- high rates of early school failure, low scores on standardized tests, high rates of grade repetition, and high drop-out rates -- can be traced to poor skills upon school entry for children from disadvantaged families. Children in the lowest achieving schools, however, have been found to learn just as much as more advantaged peers in higher achieving schools (Alexander & Entwistle, 1989). Many simply start out so far behind that they never catch up with the expectations of the school. High-quality preschool programs seek to remedy this problem by providing rich educational experiences in the years prior to kindergarten.

High-quality preschool programs have been shown to dramatically raise children's abilities at school entry, increase early and later achievement test scores, reduce grade repetition and placement in special education, and boost graduation rates (Barnett, 1997). Some of the strongest evidence of long-term benefits is provided by three longitudinal studies--the High/Scope Perry Preschool study (Schweinhart et al., 1993; Barnett, 1996), the Abecedarian study (Ramey et al., 2000; Ramey & Campbell, 1984; Campbell et al., forthcoming), and the Chicago Child-Parent Center study (Reynolds, 2000).

In these studies, children from very low income families were served in preschool programs with highly qualified teachers and small class sizes. Research over 25 years documented a chain of effects beginning with early increases in children's cognitive abilities and leading to broad improvements in achievement and social behavior. Follow-ups revealed the following strong effects:
- higher achievement test scores and school grades,
- less special education,
- higher graduation rates,
- increased adult employment and earnings, and
- less delinquency and crime.

It is clear that high-quality preschool programs with qualities like those mandated by the court produce substantial improvements in the school success of disadvantaged children, and, in particular, low-income urban children. It is even more remarkable that these programs have been found to result in benefits to taxpayers that far exceed the costs of even very expensive high-quality preschool programs. On the other hand, low-quality programs do not produce the same gains and are "penny wise and pound foolish" (Barnett, 1996).

As one-quarter of the state's children live in the Abbott districts, preschool programs that close much of the achievement gap between cities and suburbs would simultaneously help a large number of the state's children and provide an economic boost to the entire state. Thus, the Abbott preschool program offers the promise of important gains to all of the state's citizens. The State Supreme Court was aware that it was ordering both justice and sound economic policy. However, it cannot be overemphasized that the benefits will only be reaped if intensive, high-quality preschool programs are provided to all children in the Abbott districts.

# COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

## The Need for Local Collaboration

It is considerably easier for children to develop and learn with the support of strong families, who, in turn, enjoy the support of individuals and institutions in their surrounding communities. However, the increase in single-parent and dual-income families -- coupled with the gradual disappearance of small communities -- leaves a growing number of children and families isolated from helping relationships, peer and emotional support, and access to referral services (Weiss, Woodrum, Lopez, & Kraemer, 1993).

When families, schools, and community institutions (e.g., local businesses, community colleges, and health agencies) collectively agree upon their goals and decide how to reach them, everyone benefits. Schools enjoy the informed support of families and community members, families experience many opportunities to contribute to their children's education, and communities look forward to an educated, responsible workforce. Benefits are found for staff of schools and community agencies as well, with boosts in morale, heightened engagement in their work, and a feeling that their work will net results (Stone, 1993).

Researchers and practitioners have documented for some time how schools and communities working toward common goals can be beneficial (Stone, 1993). Communities can complement and reinforce the values, culture, and learning the schools provide for their students or negate much of what the schools strive to accomplish (Ada, 1994; Bricker, 1989; Nieto, 1992). Communities also can furnish schools and the students in them with crucial financial support systems, as well as the social and cultural values necessary for success and survival (Mattessich & Monsey, 1993; MDC, Inc., 1991; Miller, 1991). Finally, communities have the potential to extend social, cultural, and vocational opportunities to students and their families (Bell & Sigsworth, 1987; Hull, 1994).

Schools, in turn, offer communities a focal point of educational services for children. Symbolically, schools are seen by many as the last enduring public institutions in many communities (Lockwood, forthcoming). Instruction typically includes lessons in social and cultural skills -- particularly in the elementary grades -- in addition to acculturation into mainstream values and ethics. Schools frequently provide employment for community residents and, in some cases, offer community services. Most importantly, schools have the potential to produce well-educated citizens ready to take on responsibilities as contributing community members (Stone, 1993).

By working together, schools, families, and communities can prepare for a more promising future. In urban communities struggling against violence, unemployment, and deteriorating institutions, school-community collaboration offers hope for those who may have given up on the social institutions in their neighborhoods and cities. Rural

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communities searching for opportunities to revitalize themselves in a technologically sophisticated society can discover ways to bring themselves into the information age by intertwining school and community improvement initiatives (Stone, 1993).

The court has continually identified "the value of collaboration and consensus building," in the provision of "high-quality preschool programs for children in the Abbott districts." In *Abbott VIII*, the court was particularly impressed that "representatives from the Abbott districts, community providers, Head Start, and the Early Care and Education Coalition are participating . . . with the plaintiffs and the new administration" in "the collaborative effort now under way" to improve state and local implementation of preschool and the other Abbott remedies.

Because community involvement is so crucial to effective education, the three-year plan should be formulated in collaboration with the community to capitalize on the community's expertise and vision for the future and to ensure that the plan has widespread community support. However, the responsibility for the plan rests with the superintendent and the early childhood supervisor or director and must be approved by the board of education.

**Definition of Collaboration**

Collaboration is defined as the inclusion of stakeholders in a coordinated approach to planning and service delivery through shared leadership, decisions, ownership, vision, responsibility, and accountability. In nearly all collaborative processes, partners come together, establish common goals, share responsibility and accountability, agree to commit resources, and change existing policies and procedures to achieve their goals. Collaborative relationships require communication that values and respects the opinion, perspectives, and rights of each partner. The process will move ahead when the focus is on building trust and mutual respect, clarifying roles and expectations, listening actively, and communicating clearly.

It should be noted that the opportunity for collaboration does not guarantee an effective and truly collaborative process. Only the participants can do this. However, recognition of the research supporting collaboration and the impact it can have on developing and maintaining a high-quality preschool program should be enough to convince well-intentioned people of the urgency to work together. Further, as a district-sponsored initiative, local collaboration will not be effective without support from the top, namely, the district central office. If it has this support, the rest is up to the team of participants.

To ensure effective collaboration:

- Each district will form an Early Childhood Education Advisory Council to review and provide comment on the operational plan. A community and parent involvement specialist employed within the district will staff the council. (For other responsibilities of this position see the Family Services section on page 47.)

- The Early Childhood Advisory Council will provide an opportunity for local stakeholders in the education and welfare of preschool-age children to participate in community-wide planning, as conducted by the school district, to review progress towards full implementation of high-quality programs, regardless of venue, and to consider and propose resolution of issues that arise during implementation.

**Recommended Model**: The following practices will help identify and provide services that match the needs of the children and their communities.

- A community and parent involvement specialist should be hired by each district (in smaller districts this position may be combined with other jobs) who will staff the advisory council, oversee/facilitate the community needs assessment, organize and coordinate systematic parent involvement plans and activities, and coordinate work with other agencies.

The council might include, but not be limited to, representatives of the following groups:

- Child care providers, pediatric medical day care providers, Head Start agencies, child and family advocates, municipal government, health professionals/agencies, social service providers, higher education, philanthropic community, mental health agencies, district central office, teacher's union, business community, parents, kindergarten/1st grade teacher(s), bilingual education specialists, supervisors and administrative organizations, early intervention/special education groups, community groups such as: NAACP, Urban League, churches, YMCA/YWCA, and The New Jersey Association for the Education of Young Children (NJAEYC)

**Suggested Responsibilities of the Council**
- participate in the community assessment of specific community needs and resources, including facilities, as they pertain to the implementation of high-quality preschool services.
- participate in the development of the Three-Year Operational Plan as organized by the district preschool leadership.
- review and comment on the draft Three-Year Operational Plan.
- review and comment on preschool budgets proposed by the district.

**Structure and Operations**:
To implement local collaboration as defined here, the council should do the following:
- meet monthly when appropriate;
- elect its own leadership and adopt its own bylaws;
- be led by elected co-chairs, consisting of one district representative and one community representative;
- receive a small, operating grant from the State to cover costs of meetings; communication, training, technical assistance, and retreats; and
- include voluntary representation from the list of possible stakeholders, institutions, and organizations described above. Once organized, new representation may be added, as needed.

**Collaboration with Head Start Programs Serving Abbott-Eligible Children**

Head Start programs serving Abbott-eligible children in each community should be included in all Abbott efforts. Head Start was originally excluded from participating in the Abbott program because the children were considered "served." As many Head Start classrooms do not meet Abbott standards of class size, certification, and numbers of hours in operation, Head Start programs serving Abbott-eligible children should systematically work toward achieving Abbott standards.

To achieve Abbott standards, a collaborative effort will be required from school districts, Head Start agencies, and representatives of Department of Education, Department of Human Services and/or the Administration for Children and Families regional office. These parties will work together to develop pre-implementation plans that lead to the full implementation of Abbott standards. The following efforts will facilitate the process:

- Set specific enrollment benchmarks to reach full enrollment within three years, including any facilities expansion or renovations;
- Coordinate with the district in the development of a professional development plan;
- Describe how to incorporate the Abbott master teacher and curriculum expectations in the Head Start Program;
- Detail how the district and Head Start program will work together to provide parent/family involvement opportunities and determine the specific duties of the family worker;
- Provide a detailed budget that indicates the nature of the services that Abbott-eligible children receive; and
- Show the federal dollars in the appropriate column on the provider budget page. While Head Start will not be required to submit its entire budget, providers may be asked to submit additional budget documentation to the district and/or department.

# RECRUITMENT AND ENROLLMENT

All children ages three and four residing in the Abbott districts are eligible for services. Issues such as toilet training, immigration status, and other individual circumstances cannot prevent a child from receiving services. In fact, the mandate is to serve all eligible children. The department recognizes that the dynamic nature of communities may result in changes in strategy from one year to the next, and that the same groups may not be involved in the recruitment effort each year. Individual districts are unique and, therefore, no one strategy will work across districts. Rather, given the socio-economic, as well as the ethnic composition of a specific school district, certain approaches may be more effective. The school district should take the time to research and analyze the most effective public information strategies for its community.

Every community has a broad spectrum of organizations, both religious and social, that can assist the district and the Early Childhood Advisory Council in the recruitment process. Community groups that might be consulted include the following:

- Ministers from churches, synagogues, or other houses of worship representing denominations of families in the school district;
- Social clubs, community groups and nationally recognized organizations (scouting, YMCA, Rotary, Lions, Kiwanis, Police Athletic Leagues, Hispanic and black coalitions, etc.)
- Local employers
- Local, state or national agencies and/or charitable groups (e.g. Division of Youth and Family Services, Volunteers of America, Salvation Army);
- Professional and labor organizations; and
- Hospitals and pediatricians.

The following strategies will help ensure public awareness:

- Use private providers to assist in recruitment efforts;
- Use a variety of channels when establishing contact with the families;
- Fliers and/or bulletins can be placed in shopping bags at stores, doctor's offices, laundromats, beauty salons, restaurants, etc. Information should be presented in the language (s) of the community in a clear, direct format;
- Phone information services should be available in all appropriate languages;
- Information about the availability of child evaluation and special education services should be included in recruitment materials;
- If government/municipal access cable television channel is used and/or local radio public service announcements, the presentation must be in appropriate languages;
- Encourage local politicians to endorse the preschool program in newsletters, political mailings, campaign literature, etc.

- Prior to registration dates, send sound cars throughout district neighborhoods, providing enrollment messages that advertise dates and times of registration;
- Hold recruitment fairs in the neighborhood at local churches, rather than government/municipal offices, so that residents will feel comfortable; and
- Provide information at community events, with knowledgeable people on-site who can answer questions.

Recruitment is ongoing and takes time, creativity, and energy. The goal should be to demonstrate program growth by registering as many three- and four-year-old children in the preschool program, in accordance with the facilities capacity available to the district. The school district's strategies must be in earnest and assigned to individuals who know the community and understand the necessity of public relations. Districts should establish centralized enrollment procedures that occur year-round.

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**Recommended Model**: The goal is to serve as many children as possible in each Abbott district by using active outreach efforts.

Outreach
- Using the difference between the calculated universe and the number of children enrolled, each district will be funded $20 per child for those children not currently served.
- For the current enrollment figure, funds should be allocated at $10 per child to ensure that the parents of the following year's three-year-old children are aware of the program.

These figures are based upon the average amount provided by the state per child projected to be enrolled statewide in Abbott districts in the 2002-2003 school-year. The formula takes into account maintenance of both current and future enrollment. More funds are provided to Abbott districts that are targeting unserved population(s) of children to bring their enrollments to full capacity. As Abbott districts approach full enrollment, fewer funds should be needed. However, if a district has a specific need that cannot be met with the funds provided, the department will review and consider a request for additional funds.

Enrollment
- Each district will administer a child and family background survey to every child enrolling in the preschool program for the 2003-2004 school year. The DOE will supply districts with a uniform set of questions to incorporate into existing registration forms. This information will help the district and state anticipate the specific needs of the children, as well as provide valuable statewide data.

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# ADMINISTRATION

Central to program success are educational leadership and administrative oversight (NAEYC, 1998; National Study of School Evaluation, 2002, Frede, 1997). Administrators play an integral role in determining the quality of the many program components from the oversight of teachers to recruitment and outreach efforts. Because administrative personnel perform such a critical role, this document sets forth guidelines to maximize the effectiveness of their skills, expertise and time. The primary administrative responsibilities in Abbott districts are as follows:
- development and execution of the three-year operational plan;
- oversight of the budget, coordination of program services (e.g. bilingual, special education, social and health); and
- supervision of administrative and program staff.

Ultimate responsibility for the implementation of the plan rests with the superintendent and designated district personnel. A director and/or supervisor of early childhood education should lead both senior administrators and the Early Childhood Advisory Council in the development and implementation of the three-year operational plan. The director/supervisor should provide assistance to master teachers on professional development and best program practices, oversee the recruitment/outreach efforts, and ensure the coordination and delivery of comprehensive services, including parent involvement. This administrator may conduct some of the formal evaluations of the classroom teachers in both district-operated and private preschool classrooms. He or she must be well versed in strategies designed to help teachers and other professionals optimize children's learning and development.

Administrative support personnel like secretaries and data clerks are essential to the daily operations of any program. Support staff responsibilities may include, but are not limited to, the following:
- enrollment and registration of preschool children;
- data collection and entry;
- clerical assistance to master teachers, supervisors, directors and other personnel; and
- providing general program information to families in a friendly and helpful fashion.

In districts with schools containing just preschool and pre k-1 classrooms, funding prorated by proportion of preschool children will be provided for a principal and vice principal and one administrative support staff member depending upon the number of teachers employed in each school building. The principal or vice principal in this situation should be involved in both the development of the three-year operational plan and supervising classroom staff.

In districts that contract with more than eight centers, a fiscal specialist may be necessary. The role of the fiscal specialist is to do the following:

- help community providers develop their program budgets;
- monitor compliance with the contract;
- be responsible for collecting and reporting teacher tracking and certification information; and
- review quarterly expenditure reports in accordance with the approved private provider budgets and work with those providers needing assistance.

To be effective, the specialist should have auditing, budgeting, and accounting experience. This staff member will be directly responsible to the early childhood supervisor or director of early childhood programs. The fiscal specialist should also be linked to the business administrator's office.

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**Recommended Model**: These positions lead to effective supervision and support:

- For districts with total preschool enrollments of less than 3,000, one early childhood education supervisor should be available for every 750 students minus the number of students enrolled in district stand-alone early childhood education buildings.
- For districts with at least 3,000 total preschool students, one district-wide administrator/supervisor is a director of the preschool program.
- For districts with at least 4,000 total preschool students in all settings, one of these administrators is an assistant superintendent.
- One principal, one vice principal and one administrative support staff are provided for each stand-alone early childhood center or school serving three- and four-year-olds (The number of children served in the school should not be included in the count above.) and
- One fiscal specialist is available for each district contracting with a minimum of eight private childcare agencies.

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**THE EDUCATIONAL COMPONENTS**

## 1. CURRICULUM

During the latter half of the twentieth century, interest in the connection between curriculum and opposing theories of development was of great interest. Multiple curriculum approaches were developed that were derived directly from the dominant developmental theories. These represented three broad streams of thinking about development and learning -- didactic or direct instruction, open classroom or traditional nursery school, and interactive or constructivist approaches. In a *didactic* or *direct instruction curriculum,* the teacher presents information to the children in structured, drill-and-practice group lessons that are fast-paced, teach discrete skills in small steps, and involve frequent praise. *Open classroom* or *traditional approaches* flow from the belief that children must direct their own learning and will learn when they are ready, as long as the teachers provide stimulating materials and support for the children's choices. Socialization is often the main goal of this curriculum. Adherents of *interactive* or *constructivist curriculum* view learning as an active exchange between the child and his/her environment, one key element of which is the teacher. In this model, teachers initiate activities designed to foster children's reasoning and problem-solving abilities, and they interact with children during child-designed activities to add new ideas or enhance learning. Peer-to-peer interaction is also viewed as essential to the learning process (Frede, 1997). The interactive or constructivist approach is the only one that meets the court order for high quality based on effective research.

Curriculum, broadly speaking, is "what schools teach." This includes all that is planned for children in the classroom, such as learning centers, morning circle, or a teacher-initiated small-group activity. Curriculum also includes the unplanned or those experiences a child has while building a bridge with paper towel tubes, string, and popsicle sticks; waiting for the bus; at the snack table; or when a child has a temper tantrum. Curriculum, then, is the entire range of experiences that children have at school. Content objectives and learning outcomes, knowledge of child development, and careful observation of the needs and interests of individual children guide curriculum. The National Association for the Education of Young Children terms this "developmentally appropriate practice" (NAEYC, 1998). Developmentally appropriate practice follows the interactive or constructivist approach.

The OECE has revised and developed *The Early Childhood Education Program Expectations: Standards of Quality* that delineates effective teaching practices linked to developmentally appropriate learning outcomes. This should be the framework for planning and adopting curricula for Abbott classrooms. It is not meant to replace preplanned curricula, but instead to be a guide for making important curricular decisions both planned and unplanned. Expertise in child development and the types of experiences that support individual variations in learning and key to creating model curricula. There is no one "best" curriculum for all programs. There are many excellent curriculum models that meet the guidelines for developmentally appropriate practice and the OECE's *The Early Childhood Education Program Expectations: Standards of Quality*.

## 2. THE LEARNING ASSESSMENT AND DOCUMENTATION PROCESS

*Assessment* of young children is an ongoing process that documents evidence of early learning, in order to make informed instructional decisions. This evidence may include anecdotal records of children's conversations and behaviors in individual, small- and large-group situations, samples of artwork and drawings, and photographs, recordings or other records of children engaged in activities and play.

*Documentation*, a preliminary stage in the assessment process, focuses on identifying, collecting, and describing the evidence of learning in an objective, nonjudgmental manner. Teachers should, on a regular basis, take the time to track children's emerging skills, identify learning goals, and share the information with colleagues. Based on this information, new curriculum strategies may be generated or additional questions may be posed. Careful documentation and assessment can increase the teacher's understanding of normal child development, assist in understanding the needs of the children in a specific class, and enhance the teacher's ability to reflect on the instructional program.

**Major Purpose of Assessment in Preschool Education**

The primary purpose of the assessment of young children is to help educators determine appropriate classroom activities for individuals and groups of children.

The documentation/assessment process should do the following:

- Build on multiple forms of evidence of the child's learning,
- Take place over a period of time,
- Reflect the understanding of groups, as well as of individual children, and
- Reflect sensitivity to each child's special needs, home language, learning style, and developmental stage.

The information from the documentation/assessment process should do the following:

- Connect to developmentally appropriate learning goals,
- Add to an understanding of the child's growth and development,
- Provide information that can be applied directly to instructional planning, and
- Be communicated with the child's family and special education personnel, when appropriate.

**Importance of the Documentation/Assessment Process for Teachers' Professional Development**

Teachers who use the documentation/assessment process enhance their ability to do the following:

- Respond easier and more effectively to demands for accountability,
- Teach more effectively, using interactive experiences that enhance children's development,
- Make more productive instructional planning decisions (e.g., how to set up the classroom, what to do next, what questions to ask, what resources to provide, how to stimulate each child's development, and what external support systems are required),
- Meet more of children's special needs within the classroom. The ongoing process of identifying, collecting, describing, interpreting, and applying classroom-based evidence can help the teacher to become more aware of and develop a broader repertoire of instruction strategies, and
- Identify the most appropriate learning experiences for children.

The documentation/assessment process can also help young children to perceive learning to be important and worthwhile as they see their teachers actively engaged in documenting their learning.

**Portfolio Documentation**

Portfolio assessment is the systematic and intentional collection and interpretation of significant samples of children's work. The portfolio process should clearly indicate the learning goals, illustrate and document children's development over a period of time, actively involve children, and reflect each child's individual development based on the expectations of the child for the year.

Some strategies for portfolio documentation are as follows:

- Determine the developmental areas to be assessed (e.g., spoken language, art, early literacy, symbolic play, motor skills, math concepts, creativity and peer relationships),
- Identify the documents which best demonstrate development (e.g., drawings, paintings, other artwork, photos, dictated stories, book choices, teacher's notes, audiotapes, graphs and checklists),
- Regularly create a collection of samples with children's input (i.e., record what the children tell you about a variety of things),
- Develop a storage system for the samples of children's work,
- Describe the documents with colleagues in order to gain additional perspectives on the child's development. Study groups of teachers can be formed to collect and describe samples of children's work,
- Connect the children's work to the learning goals,

- Identify any gaps in the developmental story. Make sure the samples show the full range of what each child can do, and
- Collect data that tells a clear story to the audience.

**Observation**

Observation of young children is critical in the documentation and assessment process. However, observation is a skill that must be developed and perfected by the teacher over time. In the process of observing children, teachers can make use of the following techniques: rating forms, photography, narrative description, anecdotes, videotaping, journals, and the conversations of individual children and groups. Observation must be intentional. As part of the daily classroom routine, it is probably the most authentic form of assessment. Observing children in their daily preschool experience is the best place to start when creating a real-life profile of each child.

What to observe:

- Dispositions (trends in behavior or activity that reflect particular learning styles and motivators);
- Coping strategies (i.e., notice how a child solves a problem);
- Social interactions, including withdrawal or isolation (i.e., determine the child's place in the group); and
- Key attributes of the child (i.e., identify and list interests and play patterns).

How to observe:

- Regularly, with a specific purpose;
- At different times of the day;
- In different settings throughout the school or center;
- The usual demeanor of the child, not the unusual behavior or bad days; and
- For new possibilities. If a child is having trouble, could the environment or circumstances be changed to assist the child?

**The Parents**

Parents should be partners in the accurate and sensitive assessment of young children. The following practices help encourage parental involvement in child assessments:

- Accentuate the positive when discussing children;
- Talk about child observations informally, during everyday conversations with parents;
- Explain assessment approaches at a parent meeting or workshop. Be clear about the differences between standardized tests and authentic assessment;
- Write about assessment in a newsletter or a special letter home;

- Demonstrate that parents are respected partners in the documentation of behavior and progress of children; and
- Support comments with documentation showing what the child has accomplished over time.

**The Children**

Everyone has a view of a child's abilities, preferences, and behaviors, including the child. To effectively involve the children in their own assessment do the following:

- Observe and document things the children say and do. Often random statements such as, "I was this big on my last birthday, now I'm THIS big" are evidence that children are capable of assessing what they can do and how they are changing.
- Ask children about themselves. Children will tell you what they do and do not like to do. Some children may be pleased by a conference-like situation in which they have your undivided attention, while others may respond to more informal discussions.
- Ask children to assess their work. Ask children to help decide which work should be included in their portfolio. Respect their choices and responses about their work.
- Let children take pictures of their most prized work from time to time. They can make a bulletin board display of their specially chosen picture portfolio.

**Achievement Tests**

Individual- and group-administered norm referenced tests of achievement are usually inappropriate tools for assessing young children's development. Such instruments are not typically designed to provide information on how children learn, how they might apply their learning to real-life situations, or how the test results relate to the teacher's instructional goals and planning. Instructional planning should be grounded in the evidence of children's learning that reflects their activities as closely as possible, such as records of their language and samples of their work.

**Developmental Screening Measures**

At times, the typical preschool instructional program may not be adequate in supporting a specific child's development. Individual developmental screening measures may be used to identify children who have major impediments to learning, such as problems in the development of language, or with vision, or hearing. In such cases, the results of screening measures should be used to determine whether a child needs further more comprehensive diagnostic assessment.

Information received from a single developmental assessment or screening should never serve as the basis for major decisions affecting a child's placement or enrollment. Assessment should be tailored to a specific purpose and should be used only for the purpose for which it has consistently demonstrated reliable results.

**Referral for an Evaluation**

When a parent or teacher has a concern and suspects a potential disability, a written referral to the district's child study team should occur. The child may be eligible for special education. The parent, preschool teacher, and the team meet to determine the need for evaluation and discuss the assessments to be completed. After completion of the evaluation and a determination of eligibility, an Individualized Education Program (IEP) will be developed. In addition to special education personnel, the team always include the parent and the preschool teacher. The team will determine what types of support are necessary such as modifications to the classroom or special education services. To the maximum extent appropriate, preschoolers with disabilities should receive their preschool education with their peers.

## 3. TEACHER TRAINING

### 3a. Professional Development

Each Abbott school district will submit a district-wide preschool professional development plan as part of the three-year operational plan. This plan should be designed to achieve *The Early Childhood Education Program Expectations: Standards of Quality.* The professional development plan must be directly related to the district's long-term vision. It should include provisions for systematic ongoing training and be based on research on adult learning and children's development, as well as on a formal needs assessment. In addition to inservice workshops, various professional development techniques may be incorporated, such as mentoring, peer coaching, modeling, self-assessment, observation and feedback, and team development. The plan should also include steps to evaluate the effectiveness of each professional development strategy.

### Classroom Evaluation

Using systematic classroom observation data to plan professional development for preschool teachers and assistant teachers is also necessary for improving quality. Districts should use a structured observation instrument or set of instruments to measure quality practices in preschool classrooms. Through examination of individual classroom data and aggregate district data, finely tuned professional development can be planned. Teachers and districts then set goals for themselves and provide training opportunities to improve in the weaker areas.

To insure quality, each classroom will be observed by the early childhood education supervisor or master teacher (see role of the master teacher in the next section). On an annual basis, a program quality assessment instrument such as the PQA (High/Scope Educational Research Foundation, 1998) or ECERS-R (Harms & Clifford, 1998) will be used. The district should establish a minimum acceptable score. Improvement plans will be developed for classrooms that fall below this score. The master teacher will work with the teachers and the principal or director to identify improvements needed and establish a timeframe for making changes, providing assistance when necessary. The early childhood education supervisor, district master teacher and the principal and program director should participate in discussions to determine if the program improvements have been met.

If the district determines that improvements have not been made according to the established plan, an independent observer, hired by the district obtained from a roster provided by the department, will evaluate the classroom. The results of this neutral observation will be used by the teacher, master teacher, and appropriate administrator to determine next steps. These might include a new improvement plan or the initiation of the teacher removal process.

**District Wide Professional Development**

Too often, district staff members are not knowledgeable about "best practices" or curricula for preschool and may have inappropriate expectations for this age group. Therefore, district-wide professional development should be available that includes the benefits of preschool education and the elements of effective preschool tailored to the different audiences. For example, administrators need information, including, but not limited to, criteria for evaluating preschool teachers; preschool language and literacy, including the needs of second language learners; knowledge of the components of the curriculum; and appropriate adult-child interaction strategies, particularly classroom management. Specialists should learn about the specific standards and techniques in their content areas for working with young children while child study teams, social workers, and their administrators need information on appropriate assessments and intervention methods for young children. Additional support staff including lunch assistants, custodians, and bus drivers should receive information about interacting with young children.

The professional development plan should address administrators, master teachers, childcare directors, and teachers that are in-district, private and Head Start. It should address other educational staff, including all teachers of the handicapped, child study team members, speech and language therapists, social workers, learning consultants, occupational therapists, behavioral specialists, and nurses. It should also support teacher assistants, family workers, parent liaisons, and any other support staff. An approach which supports learners' construction of new ideas or concepts based upon their current knowledge should be used in developing the plan.

To provide professional development opportunities for the director and/or staff of private provider agencies, extra funding should be allocated in addition to the professional development opportunities offered by the district. These funds may also be used at the discretion of the director for attendance at local, regional or national early childhood education conferences or seminars. Directors should be attending the required Division of Family Development-sponsored Directors Academy and should reflect and identify their own strengths and areas needing more attention. All staff should seek to attend seminars or workshops that relate to their professional development improvement plans and/or goals of the preschool education program.

**Teacher Professional Development**

In 2000, the New Jersey Department of Education introduced a requirement for teachers to pursue 100 hours of professional development over a five-year period. These professional development hours are to focus on training in implementation of the Core Curriculum Content Standards and related topics. With the publication of the revised *The Early Childhood Education Program Expectations: Standards of Quality*, a base has been formed for the appropriate preparation of preschool teachers. Since so many new teachers

are entering the field, and many more teachers are joining the ranks of early childhood teaching from other grades and disciplines, it will be essential to ensure that all teachers working with young children are grounded in the knowledge base of preschool education. This knowledge base includes the following aspects of developmentally appropriate practice:

- Knowledge of child development, including research on the relationship between early experiences and brain development;
- Design of the learning environment;
- Curriculum design and assessment;
- Classroom management techniques;
- Emergent literacy;
- Enhancing problem-solving, skill development, and integrated content knowledge in math, social studies, science, the arts, and other domains of learning;
- Promoting social competence and healthy emotional development;
- Observation and appropriate assessment;
- Cultural competence;
- Inclusion practices;
- Methods for enhancing language development in the home language, as well as English;
- Technology in the preschool classroom; and
- Family and community involvement.

These training topics should be required for all teachers and delivered in a systematic on-going basis. All training should include relevant theory and current research and their applications to classroom practice.

Based on the individual needs of the district, teaching staff should attend a variety of workshops each year. These workshops should be both formal and informal and offered by master teachers. In addition to professional development opportunities that can take place in the classroom or after school, districts will be provided funds for district-wide staff development activities for five full days of preschool education curriculum training. This professional development should be tailored to meet the needs identified in classroom evaluations. Preschool teachers should attend building- or district-wide training, if appropriate, but not at the expense of training designed specifically for the preschool program consistent with *N.J.A.C.* 6:11-8.

**Substitutes**

Funds for the hiring of substitute teachers for the three built-in professional development days within the 245-day calendar will not be needed to supplement provider agencies. Funding is provided for the two other professional development days and should cover the cost of travel, a stipend, (if beyond contractual work time), and/or refreshments and substitutes. Funds to support hiring substitutes in the private provider agencies for the two additional days are provided by the Department of Human Services.

**Consultants**

A district may decide that an in-house professional development specialist or teacher trainer is necessary to provide professional development experiences for all teaching staff. If this were the case, hiring such a person would reduce the number of master teachers needed by the district because less of their time would be dedicated to planning and providing professional development experiences.

**Peer Tutoring**

The value of hiring teachers learning and working together is well recognized. Opportunities should be provided for preschool teachers to observe each other and to collaborate on curriculum development and meeting student needs. Master teachers should initially be responsible for helping to create the time for this and for helping teachers to develop ownership of the program. All may need guidance or training in how to use the collaborative time effectively. Each district should develop a plan to allow teacher-teacher interactions to become more regular than incidental.

**Conferences**

Participation in large conferences, while worthwhile, does not substitute for ongoing, professional development. Local, state, or regional conferences tend to offer few opportunities for active participation and hands-on experiences. In addition, there is no current method to evaluate how conference attendance meets professional development goals.

## 3b. The Role of the Master Teacher

Effective preschool programs employ teachers with high levels of education and training who have longevity (Arnett, 1989; Berk, 1985; Helburn, 1995; Howes, 1997; Howes, Whitebook, & Phillips, 1992; Vandell & Powers, 1983). To assist in the ongoing effort to provide and maintain high levels of quality, the position of master teacher was mandated by the state for Abbott preschool classrooms. General responsibilities are as follows:
- Coordinating and articulating the professional development plan for all early childhood education teaching staff;
- Providing technical assistance to center directors and other center staff;
- Overseeing transition activities between preschool and kindergarten to increase collaboration and continuity;
- Helping the teacher and assistants work as a team;
- Providing information in curriculum and high-quality early childhood practice; and
- Coordinating program delivery among the various staff members in the classroom.

Because the master teacher is a new role, districts have struggled with how to assign tasks to master teachers. Statewide research on the time use of master teachers, (Ryan, Hornbeck, & Frede, 2001) found that only 24% of the master teachers' time was devoted to direct classroom service. This included observing and giving feedback to teachers and directors, providing individual and group professional development workshops, and meeting with the director about curriculum or preschool practice. The rest of their time was spent on related paperwork and phone calls and providing service to the district that was clearly not related to improving preschool classroom practice, for example, writing grant proposals and administering tests to kindergarten children. Monitoring responsibilities must be separated from mentoring responsibilities for master teachers. Fiscal staff should oversee budgeting and contract compliance with private childcare agencies.

The master teacher is an early childhood educator employed by the school district to provide technical support and assistance to the district classroom teachers and district preschool programs. Specific responsibilities include the following:

- Model, coach and provide feedback to teachers in preschool programs regarding developmentally appropriate instruction;
- Provide staff development instruction for all aspects of the preschool program including district and private child care programs;
- Provide resources and support to preschool education programs;
- Coordinate early childhood assessment in preschool classrooms;
- Coordinate parent workshops with family workers in the private childcare centers;
- Provide information on district programs to the family worker and private provider preschool program staff;
- Provide oversight and guidance to teachers regarding the special education referral process;

- Assist the Child Study Team by ensuring that the teacher is provided with a copy of the Individualized Education Plan (IEP) and with basic information about the disability;
- Provide supervision to general education teachers regarding their responsibilities at meetings to assist in the special education process from referral to IEP development and implementation;
- Provide transition activities, programs and services between private childcare agency preschool programs and district kindergarten programs; and,
- Perform additional duties as assigned that are directly related to classroom improvement.

**Recommended Qualifications**

- Master's Degree in Early Childhood Education and three to five years experience in preschool programs;
- Experience in facilitating workshops and program improvement for preschool teachers;
- Experience in design and implementation of developmentally appropriate early childhood curriculum; and
- Experience with developmentally appropriate early childhood assessments.

**Master Teacher Time Use**

To maximize the effectiveness of the master teacher in preschool classrooms, guidelines have been established to clarify this role. This guidance will aid districts when developing the preschool education three-year operational plan. Traditionally, master teachers have been required to work the same number of hours as a classroom teacher. However, due to the requirements of the master teacher, more of the master teacher's time is needed by the classroom teachers. Therefore, master teachers should work and be compensated for an additional hour each day.

Master teachers should dedicate the greatest amount of time to classroom visits. During these visits, master teachers should observe classroom practices and provide feedback directly to teaching staff, plan and model exemplary practices, and meet with the program directors or principals. Recordkeeping can also be maintained during these visits.

A substantial amount of time will be dedicated to providing and planning for professional development experiences for classroom teachers. Preparation time is needed to develop effective, well-planned professional development. A comprehensive, articulated plan should be developed in conjunction with other master teachers and supervisors. Master teachers should consider opening these professional development sessions to other preschool teachers, not just those classroom teachers primarily served by the master teacher offering the workshop.

Master teachers also need professional development to improve their skills. Therefore, time should be dedicated for professional development opportunities that help them meet

goals outlined in Professional Improvement Plans or goals of the early childhood education program overall. For master teachers completing the "Role of the Master Teacher" course offered by the OECE, 10 days should be allotted. For those who have completed the course or have demonstrated competence in some other way, approximately 30 hours should be allotted. The department fully expects that eventually master teachers will need to obtain the P-3 endorsement and/or the master teacher training which will be offered for credit or accreditation. If a master teacher does not have a bilingual or special education certificate or background, part of the professional development plan should be aimed at obtaining these specializations.

The administration of a high-quality early childhood education program requires regular attendance at meetings organized by the district or state. Therefore, time should be set aside for each master teacher to attend meetings. Additional time should be maintained annually for miscellaneous and unexpected services that can be provided, including registration and recruitment.

**Recommended Models**: The recommended models for budgeting for master teachers described here is predicated on the understanding that novice teachers and teachers serving children with special needs and English language learners need greater guidance.

- Master teachers should be available at a ratio of one to 12 for classrooms led by uncertified teachers (either in the alternate route program or those individuals pursuing a bachelor's degree). A master teacher should make at least 20 visits to each uncertified teacher to conduct classroom observations and provide guidance in best practice. The district should dedicate sufficient time, for both travel and classroom visits, to support uncertified classroom teachers.
- Master teachers should be available at a ratio of one to 15 for classrooms led by first-year teachers. Master teachers should make at least 16 visits per year to each first year teacher for classroom observation and guidance in best practice. The master teacher should dedicate sufficient time, including travel time, to each firs- year teacher.
- Master teachers should be available at a ratio of one to 17 classrooms led by teachers with certification in their second and third years of teaching. Master teachers should make at least 14 visits per year to each certified teacher for classroom observation and guidance in best practice. Each master teacher should dedicate sufficient time, which includes travel time, to each second- or third-year certified teacher.
- Master teachers should be made available at a ratio of one to 20 classrooms led by teachers with certification and more than three years of experience. Master teachers should make at least 12 visits per year to each classroom teacher with more than three years experience teaching in early childhood classrooms for observation and guidance in best practice. Each master teacher should dedicate sufficient time, which includes travel time.
- Master teacher inclusion specialists should be employed at a ratio of one special education master teacher for every ten classrooms that have high concentrations of children with Individualized Education Plans (IEP). The inclusion specialist should have specialized knowledge in inclusion practices. The inclusion master teacher supplants other master teachers.
- Master teachers with bilingual training or certification should be employed by districts serving a large number of English language learners, offering strategies and techniques for teachers and other master teachers. Bilingual specialist master teachers should be available at a ratio of one to 15 classrooms serving large concentrations of English language learners.

These recommendations are a guide for districts to use when planning, developing and implementing the three-year operational plan. Master teachers should use professional judgment when determining how much support to provide individual teachers.

## 4. SUPPORTING ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS

The issue of how to best support the development and education of children who come to school speaking languages other than English has been under debate (Zehr, 2000). Some parents and educators feel that children should only speak English in school. Others believe that teachers should teach in the child's native language. The answer appears to be somewhere in between.

Best practice dictates that both English and the child's home language should be actively supported (McLaughlin, 1995; Snow, 1993; TESOL Standards). To be successful in US schools and ultimately the workplace, children need to be fluent in English. The concept that young children don't have to work hard to develop a second language is a myth (Snow, 1993), although younger learners generally learn their second language in the context of meaningful interactions that lend themselves to picking up the meanings of the words they hear (Snow, 1993; Genishi, 2002). It is equally important, however, that educators be alert to findings that suggest that young English language learners can easily lose their first languages (Snow, 1993). Consequently, all educational programs for young, English language learners should focus on both first-language maintenance as well as English proficiency.

The lack of attention paid to the needs of English language learners is easy to identify in classrooms. While the vast majority of classrooms that serve children learning English have at least one adult who speaks the children's home language, this is often the teacher assistant. In public school classrooms, only 50 percent of the teachers who teach Spanish-speaking children actually speak Spanish. The majority of these classrooms use Spanish to give directions to children when they do not understand English, rather than supporting development through bilingual interactions and materials. Teachers need extra guidance and support to effectively meet the needs of all students in multilanguage classrooms via a sustained, concerted effort.

### Optimal Teacher Qualifications

Effectively delivering instruction to meet the needs of linguistically and culturally diverse children takes a great deal of skill and knowledge. To optimize the delivery of services to English language learners, ideally, both the teacher and the teacher assistant will speak the languages of the children in their classroom. Both English and the children's native language need to be supported in order to provide an optimal learning environment. If teachers speak both languages, they can facilitate language learning of both the native language and English. For classrooms in which children speak a variety of languages, teachers should integrate English language learner strategies throughout the curriculum.

### Optimal Program Characteristics

The support of children's emerging skills in all areas is equally important in the preschool curriculum (physical, social, cognitive, etc.). However, the language development and

acquisition of English language learners are maximized in language-rich settings. The following classroom characteristics will help to ensure an effective program:

- Though every aspect of the child is considered in decisions about daily activities, the teacher modifies his/her teaching style by always keeping language in the forefront.
- Teachers immerse children in meaningful language experiences. They use on-the-spot labeling strategies with familiar, culturally sensitive themes and materials. Teachers avoid teaching words without meaningful contexts. For example, teachers use simultaneous translation, sing songs and read books in both languages, and use multiple media to connect language with objects and actions.
- The setting offers numerous opportunities for informal language exposure and practice. For example, songs and rhymes that naturally repeat and teach sentence patterns are part of the daily routine.
- Functional print in the classrooms, such as birthday charts, materials, and areas are sometimes labeled with pictures and words in English, sometimes in the children's native languages, providing regular, informal exposure.
- Storybooks and other materials are available in all languages of the students.
- Children have numerous opportunities to create and share their own pictures, books, and stories. These child-generated texts make literacy a more meaningful activity that reflects the child's individual culture and experience.
- Teachers encourage social interaction between English-speaking and English language learners, encouraging them to speak each other's languages, giving them motivation to experiment with their growing language skills, providing translation when appropriate.
- Numerous opportunities for language practice are available via fun games and activities, e.g. games such as "Simon Dice" ( Simon Says) are used to review parts of the body. Open-ended, language opportunities are created that encourage child-initiated conversation.
- The teacher's approach to language learning is always non-threatening, and is designed to build confidence. As children learn both first and second languages, errors are a normal part of the developmental process. Rather than having children repeat the "correct" way to say something, teachers gently rephrase or model, when appropriate.
- Daily activities are described using a range of cues so that everyone understands the routines and options: e.g. pictures, hand signals, body language, simple words.
- The setting has numerous pretend play materials like puppets, dolls, animals and telephones that encourage language and conversation.

**Other Important Program Features Related to Supporting English Language Learners**

- Children are encouraged to continue speaking their first language in school and at home. Parents are aware of the importance of maintaining both languages and are provided with examples of tools and techniques to extend this learning at home.

- Teachers are well-versed and sensitive to the languages and cultures of their students.
- At parent-teacher meetings, and in other communications with children's families, the parents' primary language is used to communicate. Bilingual staff provide assistance with both written, phone and face-to-face interactions.

**Several general factors have been identified that help insure success in serving the needs of students learning English** (Berman et al, 1995):

- All schools hold high expectations for learning and personal development of English language learners.
- The curriculum is integrated across all areas of development and revolve around meaningful student experiences.
- English language students become independent learners who learn at their own pace.
- Cooperative learning is used extensively.
- All schools are "parent-friendly" and have bilingual staff members.
- Time is used innovatively with built-in time for teacher collaboration, Saturday programs, and summer and after-school programs.
- The focus always remains on helping the students achieve English literacy and maintaining their first language.

Several models for assisting English language learners are provided. The basis for these recommendations is that at all times, English language learners, and indeed, all preschool-age children, receive systematic support for language acquisition in their natural preschool environment. Pull-out and push-in programs do not offer the continuous and comprehensive support children need, and will not be funded by Preschool Program Aid. Teachers in the program must understand the process of language acquisition and be able to create a preschool environment that enhances oral language. To support these essential skills, assistance to the teaching staff will be provided through bilingual specialists and professional development opportunities.

**Recommended Models**:  The goal of each model is to support the development of English language learners' native languages, as well as English, within the natural, daily preschool activities.

- Provide extra assistance to meet the needs of districts serving large numbers of English language learners via master teachers with bilingual expertise or certification, and increasing the number of master teachers for each classroom to a ratio of one master teacher for every 15 classrooms. Districts that serve large concentrations of English language learners should ensure that they have adequate numbers of bilingual specialists among their master teachers.
- When it is not practical to employ both a teacher and teacher assistant who speak more than one language due to multiple primary languages in a classroom, or where qualified teachers who are fluent in the children's home language are unavailable, at least one adult should be able to speak the home language of the majority of the children.
- For districts that serve a small number of English language learners, a systematic professional development plan should be implemented to ensure that teachers know how to facilitate language learning in the child's home language, as well as English. This professional developmental plan should include specific strategies to create a language-rich classroom.
- Non-bilingual teachers and teacher assistants should attend classes to develop some basic communication skills in the predominate language of the children in the classroom.

**Please note:** The bilingual specialist/master teacher should meet the same qualifications of all master teachers (i.e. hold or pursue the preschool through grade three endorsement) and have bilingual education expertise.

## 5. SPECIAL EDUCATION

The Abbott decision provides an historic opportunity to alleviate the educational disadvantages related to poverty for all children, including those with disabilities. Through Abbott's requirement for universal access to preschool, there are far greater opportunities for children to be educated in an inclusive setting with their peers and to have access to all the resources necessary to address their individualized needs. Abbott districts should lead the way in implementing a visionary approach to preschool special education that includes the placement of children in a general education classroom environment with appropriate supports to address their individual needs, according to the individualized education program. Ultimately, children with disabilities will be placed in general education classrooms in the proportion that they are found in the population. Access to well-trained general education teachers, special education teachers, paraprofessionals, mental health services and other necessary supports is integral to success. Inclusion has important educational and social benefits for **all** children (Frede, Lupo & Barnett, 2000).

Unfortunately, there are significant obstacles that currently prevent realization of this vision. Many existing teachers, administrators and paraprofessionals have little, if any, formal training in addressing the varying needs of children with disabilities. The requirement for collaboration between school districts and private childcare providers has created both opportunities and challenges. Misunderstandings often exist between parents, school districts and private providers, creating an unnecessarily adversarial situation. Children who are struggling, but not eligible for special education, are often over-identified, when other interventions may be more appropriate. Overcoming these obstacles will require a system of coordination, collaboration, and communication among all key stakeholders.

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), previously the Education of the Handicapped Act, was originally passed by the U.S. Congress in 1975 as Public Law 94-142. Its purpose was to ensure that all children with disabilities in the United States had access to a free and appropriate public education. In the years that followed, IDEA was amended several times with the most significant revisions occurring in 1997. To improve the educational outcomes for children with disabilities, the following changes were included:

- Early identification and provision of services;
- Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) that focus on meeting needs within classrooms;
- Education in classrooms with children without disabilities;
- Higher expectations for children with disabilities and agency accountability; and
- Strengthened role of parents and partnerships between parents and schools. (Federal Register, October 22, 1997, pgs. 55028-9. IDEA Requirements for Preschoolers with Disabilities, Idea Partnerships, p. 1).

Although districts in New Jersey vary in their services to preschool children with disabilities, all districts, including Abbott, are required by federal law to serve children in inclusive settings to the maximum extent possible unless the individualized education program (IEP) objectives cannot be met in a general education classroom. Thus, the burden of proof is on the IEP team to determine the least restrictive environment**.**

**Screening**

According to findings of the National Research Council (2002)**,** locally driven, universal screening of young children is associated with better outcomes for all children and will help identify those most at risk for achievement and behavior problems. It is required that all three- and four-year-old children in Abbott districts, whether or not enrolled in an Abbott preschool program, are administered an initial screening device, such as the Early Screening Inventory (Meisels et al., 1997). This information is never used to determine or deny placement. Rather, it is used to determine if a child is within the: 1) normal range of development, 2) re-screen range or 3) refer range, demonstrating the need for a referral for an diagnostic evaluation for special education. In order to ensure that three- and four-year-olds who are not enrolled in an Abbott preschool program are screened, the district should engage in extensive outreach efforts to encourage participation in screening.

**Pre-Referral**

When a child in the classroom is demonstrating learning or behavioral difficulties, it is up to the classroom teacher to closely observe and document the child's behavior. In order to support the child who is having difficulties, the teacher will attempt to adapt the activities and environment to meet the child's distinct learning or behavioral needs. The teacher will also enlist the help of the child's parents as the primary source of information concerning the child. Another resource is the master teacher. The master teacher works in conjunction with the classroom teacher to provide additional strategies to meet the child's needs and to facilitate full participation in the preschool classroom. Licensed social workers, when available, can help with additional family and community outreach to support the child's needs.

If, at anytime, the parent or the classroom teacher suspects that the child has a disability, a written referral can be made by the parent or teacher directly to the appropriate school official. The school official needs to expedite the written referral and within 20 days (excluding school holidays) arrange to hold a meeting to decide whether an evaluation will be conducted.

**Referral for an Evaluation, Determination of Eligibility, Program Development**

When a parent or teacher has a concern about a child's development and suspects a potential disability, he/she should follow these steps:

1. Submit a written request to the district's child study team for a special education evaluation. The written request (referral) must be submitted to the

appropriate school official. This may be the principal at the neighborhood school, the director of the preschool program where the child attends, the director of special education, or the child study team coordinator of the district.

2. The parent, preschool teacher and the child study team (school psychologist, school social worker, learning disabilities teacher-consultant, speech and language pathologist) will meet to determine the need for evaluation.

3. After the completion of the evaluation and a determination of eligibility, an individualized education program (IEP) is developed for the child by an IEP team consisting of a parent, a child study member, a district representative, the case manager, and general education teacher or provider. The team will determine modifications, interventions, support and supplementary services necessary to support the child.

4. To the maximum extent appropriate, preschool children eligible for special education will receive their preschool program with their peers without disabilities. In the event that there is a disagreement, the district has an obligation to inform parents of due process rights in referral.

It is important to note that a preschool teacher or administrator familiar with the district's preschool programs be available at all meetings when determining special education services. Classroom teachers should always be involved in the planning process.

**Effective Inclusion**

For Abbott preschool programs, the ultimate goal is for inclusion of children with disabilities in general education preschool classrooms to the maximum extent appropriate and that these classrooms will mirror the ratio of children with disabilities that occurs naturally in populations of children.  In this model, the classroom teacher and the master teacher will have specialized knowledge about inclusion. The classroom will collaborate with the master teacher, the child's parents, and the disability specialists as determined by the child's IEP to meet the goals of the IEP. Under *New Jersey Administrative Code* (6A: 14-4.6h) classrooms can include up to six children with disabilities. However, classrooms should begin the school year with no more than four children with an IEP, in order to accommodate identifications after the school year has begun and new placements have been made.

**Placement Options**

Some placement options districts currently used to support preschool children with disabilities:

1. Children are served only in general education preschool classrooms,
2. Children are served both in separate and in general education preschool classrooms; and
3. Children are served in segregated classrooms.

**Integrated Therapy**

Just as it is necessary for teachers of children without disabilities to know their children well and to customize interactions to match children's individual needs, it is necessary for teachers of children with disabilities to choose intervention strategies to meet the goals of the child's IEP. Across all learning domains -- social/emotional, cognitive, communication, and physical -- it is recommended that the interventions begin with the least intrusive and most naturalistic strategies and move toward more direct and structured strategies, as needed.

For all children, regardless of their special needs, cognitive, language, motor and social skills are best acquired during children's routine interactions and play activities. (Frede, Barnett, and Lupo, 2000). Therefore, therapists and itinerant special education teachers are urged to provide intervention directly in the classroom during the child's typical daily activities (e.g. at snack or while playing). Similarly, teachers are advised to integrate strategies for reaching children's IEP objectives into each child-initiated and teacher-planned activity. Assessment of a child's progress should also be carried out within the context of the natural, classroom environment, whenever possible.

Integrated therapy is given to a child with a disability during normal classroom activities (e.g. play, circle time, hand-washing.) When integrating therapy into the typical day and routine activities, all participants in the classroom environment take part. Even other children in the class will be part of various activities as the teacher, therapist, and parents work together to create situations where children can learn or "generalize" newly learned skills. The therapist will work directly in the classroom, modeling for the teacher, but also using the teacher's suggestions and lesson plans to help make the child's program part of the total classroom routine. The classroom staff members increase the impact of the therapist's time by supporting emerging skills in the classroom when the therapist is not there. Collaboration between therapists, parents, and teachers is essential for effective integrated therapy.

**Wrap-Around and Summer Services**

All preschoolers should have equal access to preschool programs including wrap-around and summer services. It is important that children with disabilities receive developmentally appropriate services throughout the entire day while they are in a preschool environment. It is equally important that children with disabilities receive developmentally appropriate services during the summer. As determined by the child's IEP, appropriately certified staff should provide educational services to students during the wrap-around period of the day and in the summer. In all cases, staff providing wrap-around and/or summer services should receive necessary professional development on how to effectively address the specific needs of the children.

**Transitions from One Program to Another**

Early Intervention

The early intervention system, under the Department of Health and Senior Services, implements New Jersey's statewide system of services for infants and toddlers with developmental delays or disabilities and their families.

Early intervention services are designed to address a problem or delay in development, as early as possible. The services are available for infants and toddlers up to age three. Public and private agencies serve as providers to address the needs of children and their families who meet the state eligibility criteria. Following the evaluation and assessment, an Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP) is developed to describe the services that are needed by the child and family and how they will be implemented. Services are provided by qualified personnel in natural environments, settings in which children without special needs ordinarily participate and that are most comfortable and convenient for the family, such as home, a community agency, or childcare setting.

An important part of early intervention services is assisting children and families to leave early intervention at the optimal time. This process is called transition. When a child is two years old, a transition information meeting is held with the parents, service coordinator, and others who have worked with the child and family to begin planning for services and supports that might be needed when the child turns three. As in other meetings about a child's needs and progress, it is essential that parents be part of the process. As a child approaches three years of age, the service coordinator helps with transition from early intervention to a preschool program and/or other support services that the child and family may need.

Often there is a gap in service for children receiving early intervention services who turn three-years of age during the summer. Districts should provide opportunities for new teachers of children with IEPs to meet, consult, and plan with the child's teachers and therapists from their previous placement and, if possible, to observe the child in the setting. This would insure minimal interruption of services and encourage a smooth transition to the next setting (see other transition techniques in section 6, Continuity and Transition).

**Recommended Models**: These models allow children with special needs to be effectively educated in an inclusive, naturalistic setting with their peers whenever possible, and to have access to all the resources necessary to address their individualized needs.

- Teachers from self-contained classrooms might instead teach the general preschool classrooms that have included children with special needs or become special education master teachers, providing assist to others.
- Professional development will be available to all teachers, master teachers, paraprofessionals, preschool administrative staff, and supervisors (both district-operated and in centers) in the following areas: adapting and modifying the curriculum, individualized education program development and implementation, and special education. The preschool special education teacher should participate in professional development that is focused on early learning and development.
- Districts will outline strategies for ensuring inclusion of children with disabilities to the maximum extent appropriate in district-operated and center sites.
- Inclusion master teachers should be employed at a ratio of one special education master teacher for every ten preschool classrooms serving large concentrations of children with special needs. These master teachers should have specialized knowledge of ways to naturally support the goals of the IEP. The inclusion master teacher supplants other master teachers.
- Enrollment practices accommodate children with special needs who enter the program midyear. Children who are identified as requiring special education services mid year remain in their original classroom whenever possible. Transitions are difficult for all children, but this difficulty is often intensified for children with disabilities.
- A preschool Child Study Team with expertise in early childhood education and development will be exclusively available for approximately every 750 preschool children. In districts will less than 750 preschool children, one team should be available for every 750 children in preschool through grade three.

## 6.  CONTINUITY AND TRANSITION

The literature on early childhood practices provides a strong rationale for creating continuity in transitions during this period. Achievements made during preschool, especially cognitive gains, sometimes fade as children move through subsequent grades (Shore, 1998). Changes in program components like parent involvement, classroom organization, and teaching style may explain the differences in growth (O'Brien, 1991). Similarly, children have been found to have difficulty adjusting to classrooms where the rules, routines, and underlying philosophy differ from their previous experience (Shore, 1998).

Transitions To Preschool

For many children and their families, their first major transition occurs when they enter preschool. Preparing families for the transition process helps orient families to the program, anticipate services based on each child's need, and provides valuable insight to information about the child and family. Family participation also helps reduce some of the stress that may be associated with transition.

The level and type of participation prior to enrollment will vary across families, based on each family's interests, resources, and general ability to be involved. Offering a range of flexible ways to learn about the program will help ensure that most families are oriented to the program. The following activities will foster smooth transitions:

- Offer parent meetings focused on child and family expectations and services in the preschool setting. Topics can include parent role, curriculum, and family services.
- Send out invitations to visit the preschool.
- Have an open house for families.
- Hold a child orientation at the preschool prior to attending.
- Set up home visits for teachers to meet the families.

To facilitate a smooth transition for toddlers who attend child care or for children with disabilities already in early intervention programs, preschool teachers should meet, consult, and plan with the child's teachers and therapists, when appropriate from their previous placement. If possible, they should observe the child in the setting (see Transitions to New Settings, Special Education, Section 5).

Transitions Within Settings

One way to facilitate continuity and minimize transition is by implementing multi-age practices. The term "multi-age" refers to the grouping of children so that the age span of the class is greater than one year. This technique uses both teaching practices and the makeup of the classroom to maximize the benefits of interaction and cooperation among children of various ages. In mixed- or multi-age classes, teachers encourage children with

different experiences and stages of development to interact with each other throughout the day, naturally facilitating emerging skills (Katz, 1998). Another way to minimize effects of transitions is to loop, or keep the same group of children and adults together for more than one year.

**Optimal Mixed-age Groupings**

Ideally, districts will create multi-age settings for three- and four-year-old children. Children of both ages will stay with the same adults in the same room for a two-year period, creating a "family" type learning environment that includes the children, teachers, and parents.

Cross-age learning allows for social interaction, modeling, mentoring, and leadership among children. A child may accomplish something earlier with support from a more advanced peer while the older child experiences feelings of confidence and compassion (Vygotsky, 1962; Vygotsky, 1978; Slavin, 1987). A multi-age setting allows teachers to foster an emotionally secure environment for children to grow, learn, take risks and experience success. While children are developing social skills, learning responsibility, and engaging in more complex play, teachers are generally more child-centered, as they must adeptly accommodate individual strengths, interests, and needs. The two-year time period helps ensure that teachers, parents, and children know each other well and develop a working partnership.

**Same-age Groupings**

If a district is unable to provide multi-age classes, looping can be used on its own, allowing same-age children (all threes or all fours) to remain with the same adults for two or more years. If the children must move from one room to another from year one to year two, the teachers and children would travel together.

For community partners, looping up through second or third grade is usually not practical. Therefore, looping with the same adults in the same classroom environment should continue to the highest available "grade level" in the partnering agency.

<u>Transitions To Kindergarten</u>

It is also important to smooth out the transition from preschool to the next setting. This will help prepare children for the new situation and increase the involvement of parents and families in the process (Transition Planning Guide, 1999; Bohan-Baker & Little, 2002). General transition activities are as follows:

- Invite families to visit children's future kindergarten.
- Distribute home-learning activities, including summer book lists and other literacy activities for the summer months prior to kindergarten entry.

- Partner with local parent-teacher association to inform parents about how they can be involved in their child's kindergarten setting and connect new families with families currently enrolled in the school.
- Disseminate information to parents on the transition to kindergarten, including kindergarten registration guidelines, kindergarten options in the community, information on specific schools once placements have been made, and health and nutrition information to ensure that children enter school healthy.
- Offer early registration for kindergarten so that families have time to prepare children for their new setting and specific teachers can contact their prospective students well before the first day of school.
- Arrange field trips to participating elementary schools and kindergarten classrooms to increase children's familiarity with the new environment.
- Invite future teachers to visit children and give parent presentations.
- Ask current preschool teachers to visit the participating classrooms. These visits can promote the sharing of curriculum information, early childhood strategies, philosophies, and special needs of specific children.
- Offer meetings focusing on child and family expectations in the next setting to better prepare children and their families for the opportunities and challenges they will encounter. Parenting and curriculum, the school district's structure, family services and advocacy, and other topics can be covered.
- Hold workshops that combine both preschool and elementary school teachers to discuss and coordinate curriculum and teaching practices ensuring continuity from one setting to the next.

# HEALTH AND NUTRITION

The goal of school health services is to strengthen and facilitate the educational process by improving and protecting the health status of children and staff. According to the "School Health Services Guidelines" developed by the New Jersey Department of Education in 2001, the health and intellectual development of children are inextricably related. For instance, screening of students for current immunization helps to reduce absences due to illness. Screening for vision or hearing problems removes potential obstacles to learning. Health services staff provide physical and emotional support so that children can better cope with periodic illness and injury, which are commonly a part of growing up. Schools also provide daily support to students with chronic health needs.

**School Nurse**

The school nurse is a health services specialist who assists students, families, and staff in attaining and maintaining optimal health and health attitudes. School nurses strengthen and facilitate the educational process by improving and protecting the health status of children and staff.

> **Recommended Model**: Basic child health services will identify and alleviate barriers to participation.
>
> - Each district will conduct health examinations to include, at a minimum, vision, hearing, dental, height and weight screenings of each Abbott-eligible child upon entry into the school district.
>
> - Nurses may be employed at a ratio of 1: 300 students and will provide services to all students including those in private provider programs.

**Food and Nutrition**

Children should receive adequate nutrition and education concerning health and nutrition. Meals and/or snacks should be planned to meet a child's nutritional requirements as recommended by the Child Care Food Program of the United States Department of Agriculture. Guidelines have been established by the Department of Agriculture, Child and Adult Care Food Program that will allow both profit and non-profit private providers to apply for the Child Care Food Program. All contracting private providers should apply to this program. The department will provide funds for any portion of the food program that is not reimbursed by the Child Care and Adult Food Program when private providers demonstrate that they are not eligible for these funds and/or when the reimbursement rate provided by the Department of Agriculture is not sufficient to cover the cost of the food program.

# FAMILY SERVICES

The creation of a family/school partnership is considered to be an essential ingredient of an effective preschool program (Henderson & Berla, 1994; Epstein, 1986). When teachers actively involve parents in their children's school experience, parents are more committed to the program's goals (Henderson & Berla, 1994) and report greater interest and satisfaction with their children's education (Epstein, 1986). With systematic coordination between home and school, we can more meaningfully support all aspects of the child's life. If educators and parents work together, children have a chance of reaching their maximum potential.

Many families encounter challenges that place children at risk. Basic issues involving clothing, shelter, and medical care add to family stress and interfere with a child's ability to learn. Program staff must partner with parents and support them in their role by understanding their perspectives, enhancing their understanding of child development, assisting them in reaching their goals, and involving them in the program. Every program must carefully balance knowledge of the obstacles that their families face with high expectations. The greatest predictor of a child's life success, regardless of education and income levels, is a family's ability to do the following (NEA Communications, 2002):

- Create a home that encourages learning by reading aloud to and otherwise positively interacting with children
- Become involved in their child's education at home and at school
- Actively organize and monitor children's time
- Get involved with school early on

## Defining Family Involvement

Family makeup varies widely and can include parents, stepparents, grandparents, brothers, sisters and others living in the household. There are numerous and varied ways to effectively engage family members, from helping out at the school to taking an active role in the decision-making processes. These differences can be misconstrued as indifference to children's education. It is critical that schools develop policies that are sensitive to, and reflective of, the communities they serve.

## General Ways to Include Families (Epstein, 1997)

Communicating
    Communication between home and school is regular, and two-way.
Parenting
    Parenting skills are promoted and supported.
Student Learning
    Parents play an integral role in assisting student learning.
Volunteering
    Parents are welcome in the school, and their support and assistance are sought.

<u>School Decision-Making and Advocacy</u>
    Parents are involved in the decisions that affect children and families.
<u>Collaborating with Community</u>
    Community resources are used to strengthen schools, families and student learning.

**Specific Ways to Include Families**

The best way to accommodate the varying types and degrees of family participation is to offer a range of flexible ways to get involved. The following approaches easily adapt to each individual family's changing needs and circumstances:

- Create an atmosphere in which teachers, administrators, and families all value parental involvement. Communicate to parents that their involvement and support makes a great deal of difference in children's development.
- Include teachers, parents and other family members in the design of family services plans.
- Ask families to develop their own participation goals.
- Design a volunteer calendar and encourage parents to participate when possible.
- Regularly communicate. Focus on verbal communication when written language is an obstacle.
- Create a browsing and checkout library with books, videos, cassettes, brochures, and magazines.
- Make it easy for parents to attend meetings and visit the school by offering transportation and child care.
- Hold meetings at different times of the day to accommodate working schedules.
- Send frequent communications to families about both individual children and classroom content. Provide information about key child developmental milestones and ways to nurture and support growth. Offer specific, individualized strategies that guide families how to help at home.
- Act as a clearinghouse for external supports like local businesses, health care agencies, and colleges, making services more accessible.
- Solicit the help of interested parent partners.

The following positions are proposed under the title of Family Services:

**Community and Parent Involvement Specialist**

Classroom teachers are central to the way in which parents and other family members are included in the program. The community and parent involvement specialist works with and supports teachers' efforts. The specialist facilitates the community needs assessment, staffs the Early Childhood Education Advisory Council, organizes and oversees systematic parent involvement plans and activities, and coordinates work with other agencies.

**Social Worker (MSW)**

The social worker should collaborate with the classroom teachers, master teachers, and other district professionals to support the Family Services Program. In conjunction with the community and parent involvement specialist, the social worker should reach out to the families, determine individual needs, provide advocacy services, and help obtain available community services. Ongoing follow-up assessment and appropriate changes to services should be provided. Responsibilities should also include assisting parents in learning about child development, nutrition, providing a safe environment, and how to support the curriculum chosen by the district. The social worker should accomplish this by designing and providing parent workshops based on identified needs and topics revealed on parent surveys. Parents of children with Individual Education Plans should be included in all workshops.

**Family Worker**

Family workers should have experience working with families, knowledge of social service agencies and community resources and experience working in the local community. An associate degree is preferred, but strong prior experience can be substituted. The family worker's responsibilities should include meeting with classroom teachers and families to help identify specific concerns or needs, assist in locating resources in the community, and support the family in utilizing these resources. The family worker should provide ongoing communication with the family to ensure that their specific needs are being met. The family worker should work as a team member with classroom staff, master teacher, and other professionals to support the child and family.

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**Recommended Models**: These staffing models will support and extend the services provided by classroom teachers, and will help to maintain communication with families.

- One family worker will serve every 45 children/families.
- A social worker (MSW) will serve the district programs at a ratio of one per 250-300 children.
- One community and parent involvement specialist will work with each district.

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# PROGRAM EVALUATION AND IMPROVEMENT

Abbott programs are committed to providing high-quality programs for young children and their families. To create and maintain quality, each program will conduct a self-evaluation. The evaluation process will examine the total program, from the quality and nature of staff-child interaction to the developmental appropriateness of the activities, health and safety of the setting, teacher-child ratios, staff qualifications, physical environment, administration, and ability to accommodate the needs of the children and their community. The focus is on how well the components of the program work together to support each child's learning and development. Each program's self evaluation should be conducted yearly with representatives from all members of the program. Parent surveys, teacher surveys, administrator evaluations, and classroom observations should be used to determine how well the program is working. Protocol for carrying out program evaluation is under development, but the general characteristics of the program measured are as follows:

## Community Involvement

An Early Childhood Advisory Council is in place and participates in program planning, community assessment, and the self-evaluation.

## Recruitment and Enrollment

The school district actively recruits eligible children throughout the year using multiple strategies. The help of churches, public agencies, and other groups is sought.

## Administration

All staff qualifications, teacher-child ratios, and other staffing and administrative requirements are met. Staff-administrator communication is encouraged via regular staff meetings and in-class observations.

## The Educational Components

Curriculum
- Curriculum guidelines as described in *The Early Childhood Education Program Expectations: Standards of Quality* are met.
- Teachers demonstrate knowledge of how children learn and develop.
- Teacher expectations vary appropriately for children of differing ages and abilities. Individual differences are respected.
- All aspects of the child are supported, including language development, cognitive development, social and emotional development, and physical development.
- Children work and play individually or in small groups, minimizing whole-group activities with a balance between child-initiated and teacher-initiated activities.

Assessment
- Children's progress is regularly tracked via portfolio recordkeeping systems and observation.
- Child observation and portfolios are used to plan curricula and strategies.
- Screening devices are used appropriately.

Professional Development
- Professional development guidelines as described in *The Early Childhood Education Program Expectations: Standards of Quality* are met.
- A professional development plan is in place that meets the requirements and any additional needs of the children being served.
- Training topics cover all aspects of the child's development, as well as the specific needs of the program.
- Appropriate training for administrators, therapists, and other personnel is provided.
- Appropriate assistance and training is provided to teachers of English Language Learners, as well as to teachers working with children with special needs.
- Systematic classroom evaluation is used to determine professional development topics.

Supporting English Language Learners
- Teachers use strategies to support English language learners.
- The focus is on helping children achieve English competency and maintaining their first languages.
- The curriculum provides numerous language enrichment opportunities.

Special Education Services
- Children with special needs are served in least restrictive environments in a child-oriented, least intrusive and naturalistic fashion.
- The proportion of children with and without special needs reflects that of the general population.
- Inclusion is used whenever possible.
- The IEP team includes the teacher, parent, child study member and special education personnel.
- Concerted efforts are made to naturally integrate therapies and special services, and to communicate to teachers and other personnel following transitions to new settings.

Continuity and Transition
- Multi-age practices are used that maximize the benefits of interaction and cooperation among children of various ages.
- Families, teachers, and children are prepared for transitions to new settings.

**Health and Nutrition**

- All children receive health screening upon entry into the district.
- Meal and snack requirements established by US Department of Agriculture are in place.

**Family Services**

- Parents are welcome in the school, and their support and assistance are sought.
- Parents are partners in the decisions that affect children and families.
- Community resources are used to strengthen schools, families, and student learning.
- Communication between home and school is regular and two-way.
- Parenting skills are promoted and supported.
- Parents play an integral role in assisting student learning.
- Barriers to family involvement like transportation and language are reduced.

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**APPENDIX**


**What Does High-Quality Preschool Look Like?**
**A DAY IN AN INTENSIVE, HIGH-QUALITY PRESCHOOL**

*Ms. Guzman, the assistant teacher in a preschool classroom for 15 children from diverse income, racial, ability, and linguistic backgrounds, is conducting morning meeting. Everyday they read a story in both Spanish and English, sometimes the children take roles and act out the story. Sometimes the story was written by one of the children in the publishing area during free play time. Today, Ms. Guzman uses one of the strategies that she and the speech therapist devised for helping a child in the classroom who has severe articulation problems. She and the fifteen children take turns thinking of sounds and patterns to chant, such as "Tuh, --- tuh, tuh" or "Beep, ---- b, b, b, beep, beep." She asks the children, "What sounds do you hear in that chant? . . . .What letter do you think might make that sound? . . . . .Who can think of a chant that would rhyme with "beep?" While conducting this activity she translates each of her questions into Spanish. She responds to children in the language they speak to her but translates for the rest of the group. They hear the story and sing all of the songs in both languages. The English-speaking children are learning Spanish as the Spanish-speaking children learn English.*


*It's breakfast time and Mr. Jackson, the teacher, is sitting with eight children at a large table while Ms. Guzman has breakfast with the other seven children. Mr. Jackson brings down the calendar where they write the names of children who have already had turns passing out bowls, napkins, and spoons. After giving them a few moments to study the calendar Mr. Jackson asks, "Who hasn't had a turn to help this week?" Five children raise their hands. Monique says to Simone, "Put your hand down, girl. You went on Monday. See there's your name right there." She points to Steven's name on Monday. Simone replies disgustedly, "That doesn't say Simone. There's no 'm.'" Mr. Jackson moves the calendar closer to Monique and says, "You're right; Simone does start with an 's' like this name, but listen to other sounds." He slowly enunciates Steven and children name some of the letter sounds they hear. Three children are chosen to be helpers and Mr. Jackson assures the others that they will have a turn at lunchtime. Maurice studies the calendar while the dishes are passed out and children help themselves to breakfast. He comments, "There sure are a lot of twos on this calendar, Teacher." "What an interesting observation, Maurice. What else can someone tell me about the numbers on the calendar?" Mr. Jackson asks. Children notice how many ones there are and how few there are of other digits. "After breakfast it will be free play time. Maurice, would you and some friends like to make a chart of how many of each number there are on the November calendar? Marta's mother is here today and might like to help you with that."*

*After breakfast, children are working at child chosen activities in the clearly defined interest areas. They have turned the House Area into a grocery store after visiting a local*

*grocery store last week. Children buy and sell groceries, "writing" shopping lists, labels, and price lists. In the block area, four children are making ramps and Mr. Jackson is helping them figure out how to measure which cars go the farthest and how changing the angle of the ramp affects the distance. Marta's mother is helping Maurice and Monique make a chart of the numbers in the November calendar. In the toy area, two children are sorting shells into different containers. Tonia, Marta and Brenda are building with inch cube blocks. Marta's building keeps falling down. Ms. Guzman sits next to Marta and observes for a short while. Marta pushes the blocks away in disgust. In Spanish, Ms. Guzman asks, "What's happening to your building, Marta?" "The walls keep falling down," Marta complains. "That's making you feel frustrated, isn't it?. . . Look at Brenda's building. Her walls are staying up. Maybe, you could ask her how she does that. . .Tonia, I have to talk to Luis. Can you help Marta talk to Brenda about how to get her walls to stay up?" This conversation has been entirely in Spanish. Tonia who is bilingual asks Brenda to help Marta. She says to Marta, "Ahora, di 'thank you.'" ["Now, you say 'thank you.'"]*

*In the art area, two children are painting at the easel. Ramona is painting a peacock from the perspective of a child who is standing eye to eye with it. The peacock's tail is painted in large oblong shapes similar to the NBC peacock. On the other side of the easel, Jon has three paint jars with white, red and blue paint and two others of red and blue. He puts his paintbrush in the red, then dips it into the white and makes dabbing marks on the edge of the paper. He exclaims, "Look, Teacher, I made different colored pinks!" Mr. Jackson asks, "How did you did that?. . . Tell Ramona what you discovered." Tiffany has brought a cookie sheet over from the House Area and is filling it with play dough cookies. She rolls the play dough into a log and then slices it. She fills about half of the cookie sheet with green cookies and the other half with yellow ones. "Do you think you have the same number of yellow cookies as green ones?" Mr. Jackson asks. Tiffany starts to count the cookies of each color but keeps loosing track of which cookies she has counted. Mr. Jackson helps her devise a way to match one green with one yellow cookie and then compare the total number. Josue is building a robot out of small boxes, toilet paper tubes, buttons, cloth and other scrap materials. Iris has written her name in glue and is placing buttons on the glue letters. For each line in a letter, for example the angled part of a capital A, she uses a different type of button. Ms. Guzman comments, "It seems to take a lot more buttons to fill up the R than it does the I." Iris begins to count the number of buttons in each letter.*

*After about an hour of play, children and teachers clean up the room. The teachers help the children compare the sizes and other attributes of toys as they put them away, organize the tasks by planning what to clean up first, second, etc. and think about the time it takes to clean up different types of messes.*

*After reading Effie during story time, the teacher is working with eight children at a small table. Each child has a mixing bowl and spoon in front of him. After discussing how the characters in Effie are made out of play dough, the teacher introduces the activity; "You need four different ingredients. Let me show you. The first ingredient is flour (puts a bag of flour in the middle of the table), the second ingredient is salt, and the third*

*ingredient is oil. Do you think we have all of the ingredients?" Tiffany: "No! We need more!" The teacher asks, "How many more? (Children look puzzled) Well, I said we need four different ingredients and how many do we have on the table? . . . . (Tiffany counts three.) So, how many more ingredients do we need to make four? . . . That's right Ramona. We need one more ingredient, and that ingredient is . . (showing them a water bottle). (As children begin to grab for ingredients.) Wait a minute. How do you know how much of each ingredient you need? . . . To make your play dough just right, you need three cups, each one a different size. You need a big cup (puts 1 cup in the middle of the table), a medium size cup (puts 1/3 cup in the middle), and a small spoon (puts tablespoon in the middle)." Josue says, "That's a tiny cup" (pointing to tablespoon). Brenda: "That's the papa, mama, and baby cup" (pointing to each cup)!*

*The teacher holds up bag of flour. "The first ingredient you need is flour. You need the most of flour. Which cup should you fill with flour? (Some children look confused but two children point to the biggest cup) Ramona, why do you think you should fill that cup with flour?" Ramona: "Because it's the biggest!" The teacher replies, "That's right. It's the biggest cup and we need the most of flour. Everyone needs to pour 1 cup of flour into his or her bowl. (The teacher puts two more measuring cups on the table, and children take turns measuring and pouring 1 cup of flour into their bowl.) The second ingredient you need to put into your bowl is salt. You need a medium-size amount of salt. Which cup should you fill with salt?" Tony: (points to 1/3 cup) "That one! Because it's not too big or too small. It's in the middle." They continue comparing amounts until they have the entire recipe. Then they mix and play with the play dough.*

*Later in the day after outdoor play, lunch, nap, another story read and acted out, and another free play period . . . .*

*The same small group of children work with the teacher to add red food coloring to their play dough. The children draw the number of drops of food coloring they would like to add to their play dough on a small card. They work together to put the balls of play dough in order from lightest to darkest comparing the number of drops written for each child with the color of the play dough.*